

Sermon for 20 August 2023 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Scriptures: Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 133(UM 850); Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32); Matthew 15:10-28

Other than bad manners, what's Jesus an example of in today's Gospel reading?

It's a very painful passage.

Even though there are other places where he's harsh and critical, this scene is hard for us to include. He's critical, one-sided ...

And he relents.

It's one of the most beautiful moments I know in the Bible.

Can we talk about it a little?

The commentator is quite clear that Matthew was certain Jesus came for the Jews first, and maybe most.

The passage from Paul is equally sure that God chose the Jews to start over with.

Can we let that stand, along with all our history, as Christians, of anti-semitism?

Do you feel free to use Scripture but not worship it?

Does it make you think of today's problems?

The Sunpaper said 26,000 people signed up for public housing in one week recently in Baltimore. Isn't that a sign of something still needing to be fixed?

I read yesterday that the U.S. believes 500,000 soldiers have been killed in the war in Ukraine. Doesn't God grieve over that?

Let us pray.

Dear Lord, thank you for the mystery of scripture. Give us the Spirit to see Jesus just as human as we are, and everybody we know or hear about as well. Stretch us to recognize the needs we can fill, and then give us the energy and courage to meet them. Show us the beauty of your presence all around us ... including within ourselves. Let us learn more about forgiving, starting with ourselves and then going on and on into the most fiercesome places we know and see, and more love than we can possibly shelter ... except that you are right there, right here,

where we see and love and ... turn around, just as Jesus does, and grow better and more believing. Help us be grateful for the whole picture you give us of the human being, Jesus, this day, in this place, and forever more.

Amen.